



***Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond***  
**June 3-7, 2013**

## **Aboriginal community tests out new dollar-tracking program**

[CTV News](#)

June 2, 2013

Daniel J. Rowe



*The remains of a Canadian flag can be seen flying over a building in Attawapiskat, Ont., on Nov. 29, 2011.*  
*(Adrian Wyld / THE CANADIAN PRESS)*

KAHNAWAKE, Que. -- David Acco stands before a projector screen showing off a new software system he hopes will answer critics of First Nations financial management.

After spending the majority of his adult life around software and IT, Acco's latest project has been to develop an accounting program intended specifically for aboriginal communities.

The result is the Native Economic Management System. It was created by Acco, co-founder of the native consulting firm Acosys Inc., and the economic-development commission in Kahnawake, a Mohawk community across the St. Lawrence River from Montreal.

## PHOTOS



*The Northern Ontario reserve of Kaschechewan is seen in this undated handout aerial photo.*

"This is what I like about this system," he says repeatedly, while IT technician Sose Canadian clicks from link to link to offer examples of how a native community can gain better control of its finances.

"It's a system that's developed by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people."

Native finances have been thrust into the public spotlight over the last two years, since the Ontario community of Attawapiskat declared a state of emergency and fell into third-party management.

The federal government subsequently audited the community in September 2012. According to the controversial Deloitte audit, which cost the government \$400,000, over 80 per cent of the \$104 million provided to the community since 2005 was missing an adequate paper trail.

That audit damaged Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence's public image during her hunger strike against federal policies last winter.

Acco says the problem often isn't that a community has wasted money -- but simply that it doesn't have a proper accounting system.

The NEMS system, which is first being used in Kahnawake, aims to track costs.

Canadian clicks on one link to show how a training program can be added to a community member's profile, much like adding a school to a Facebook profile.

Different governments, including First Nations ones, can now see how much a program cost, who used it, and what opportunities it led to.

"They know how much money they have spent on (someone) because they have this historical record," said Acco. "It's better management of money because you can actually show the federal government this progression."

In another example, suppose a railway is offering a program for returning native veterans. The offer can be added to the system and returning vets in the community can be contacted.

What if a film production needs hair and makeup interns? The commission can contact those who have experience in the community, based on their profile.

And, eventually, the federal government might ask in an audit where money was spent. The community's programs are logged in the system, along with the price tag.

Acco and Canadian add a training program to a user's profile. Now if that person returns with no job in the future, the local government can check to see if other graduates found work and, if not, ask why to those offering the program.

"I think it is empowering the community in terms of being able to justify the costs. Because, often, they fall into third-party receivership without any justification, or they don't have the power to justify why they spent the money they did," said Acco.

As of April, there were 161 First Nations communities receiving management support with 14 of them fully under third-party management.

The federal government has also passed the First Nations Transparency Act, Bill C-27. The law requires First Nations communities to prepare and disclose audited consolidated financial statements on a yearly basis starting in July 2014, in addition to chiefs and councillors' salaries and expenses.

The standards are meant to bring First Nations communities in line with other levels of government.

First Nations groups, including the Assembly of First Nations, objected to the bill. National Chief Shawn Atleo said solutions lie in aboriginal communities, with aboriginal citizens, and not in more control from Ottawa.

For his part, Acco says he's seen many examples of outsiders thrusting management solutions onto First Nations communities, with little success.

He says other frequently used software is expensive, complicated to use, and fails to account for variables that matter to aboriginal people.

"These other systems are developed off-reserve and they don't understand the on-reserve realities," said Acco. "What I like about this system is it takes into account the realities of the aboriginal communities."

Acco brings up the urban native reality as an example.

The federal Indian Act system limits opportunities for those living outside their community. People can lose access to education benefits such as bursaries, scholarships and programs, as well as the right to land that might become available in the community. Many also lose tax-exemption rights.

NEMS can keep records of the urban off-reserve populations. That way council leaders stay connected to those who have chosen to live in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg or Vancouver for work, school or other reasons.

"It gets rid of that have and have-nots -- where you have that argument where if you're on the reserve you'll get funding, and if you're off the reserve you'll get no funding," Acco said.

"You lose a lot because you or your parents made a choice to be urban and go where they can find work."

If they are in the NEMS system, people can remain in touch with their community without physically being there.

Information is key for the system to work. By adding profiles for members and programs, NEMS can help Canadians understand realities in First Nations communities.

With a proper overview of the community, Acco said, true financial management talks can truly begin.

"It's better to have that sort of open discussion with some data," he said, "than to have that sort of discussion with conjecture."

## **York's public school board launches First Nations teaching tool**

[Yorkregion.com](http://Yorkregion.com)

June 3, 2013

Teresa Latchford



*First Nations education*

*Nick Iwanyshyn*

*York Region District School Board First Nations curriculum adviser Dawn Sillaby-Smith speaks during the board's Tracing our Historical Footprints event.*

Your child will learn more about First Nations history following the launch of a new teaching resource.

The York Region District School Board teamed up with the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board and First Nations leaders to create the First Nation, Métis and Inuit: Tracing our Historical Footprints educational resource.

The living document, which is expected to be expanded in the coming years, was launched at a celebration in Newmarket featuring a smudge ceremony, songs performed by Georgina Island and Aurora's Bond Lake Public School students and a drum and hoop dance demonstration by Joseph Osawamick.

"We are at the beginning of a process in the province and continue to work on how to integrate this history in every classroom across the province," York board school superintendent Steven Reid said at the launch. "Many teachers will say they don't have the history to do so, but that is what this resource is for."

There has been a growing desire for more information regarding treaties and local history and to honour First Nations culture and heritage, First Nations curriculum adviser Dawn Sillaby-Smith said.

The project began with a vision of 10 resource cards that included 10 things people always wanted to know about First Nations people, but were afraid to ask. The finished product has 86 cards featuring quotes, summaries, key facts, thought-provoking discussion questions and instructional strategies for each topic, many of which are treaties.

The cards will act as starting points for educators and students and are supported by lists of more resources and digital components with video interviews, pod casts, maps, student handouts and more.

Although the goal is to include First Nations units across all courses, the resource begins by targeting Grade 10 history students.

"We have by no means exhausted the history of our people, but rather this is just the beginning of the journey," Ms Sillaby-Smith said. "We want to support our First Nation students and bring awareness to the rest."

The hope is school boards across the province will embrace the new resource and begin to add to it as they are able.

## **Harper government undermining First Nations' rights, chief says**

[SooToday.com](http://SooToday.com)

June 4, 2013



*Foreign policy agreement ignores First Nations interests*

MUNSEE DELAWARE NATION (June 4, 2013) – The Anishinabek Nation supports the Hupacasath First Nation in its legal battle against the Canada- China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA).

FIPA was tabled in the House of Commons last September without any First Nations consultation and accommodation.

The agreement affects puts the future of natural resources in Canada, and also ignores treaty relationships that Canada has with First Nations. Grand Council Chief Patrick Wedaseh Madahbee has affirmed the Anishinabek Nation's opposition to FIPA.

"Every time we turn around Canada is doing something to undermine First Nation rights and jurisdiction then they wonder why the majority of First Nations oppose federal Conservative policies," Madahbee said. "I don't know who they're consulting, if anyone, but it sure isn't the Anishinabek First Nations."

Chief Isadore Day Wiindawtegowinini [shown] from Serpent River First Nation and also the Anishinabek Robinson- Huron Regional Chief described the situation as going against international laws.

"Our treaties are internationally credible and just as valid as any other Nation to Nation relationship in the world. Canada has no right to sell or assume jurisdiction over resources in the Lake Huron Region or any Anishinabek region. Every piece of land and every ounce of water are protected by treaty rights, and our treaty rights protect our inherent rights and these rights are recognized by the United Nations," said Chief Day.

The Canada- China agreement ignores treaties that were agreed to prior to Canada becoming a country and in essence, FIPA undermines the Canada- First Nation treaty relationship.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Article 32 says: "States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned...in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their land or territories and other resources,

particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources," both Canada and China are among the state governments that have endorsed UNDRIP.

"Canada is a colonial government and the Canadian government has not consulted with the rights holders, which are the First Nations who hold the legal, underlying title to all lands, waters and resources across the country," Madahbee said.

"There are Supreme Court decisions that explicitly direct the government to consult and accommodate First Nations in instances such as this. The United Nations continually acknowledges our rights through international forums, but the question remains: Is Canada above the law when it comes to First Nation rights? From everything we've seen over the years it would appear as though First Nations have no real protection in Canada's constitution, Canada's legal system, or in the framework of international declarations. Until they start respecting our rights we have no reason to believe that equality and democracy exists in Canada and the international community should be paying attention."

The Anishinabek Nation established the Union of Ontario Indians as its secretariat in 1949.

The UOI is a political advocate for 39 member communities across Ontario, representing approximately 55,000 people.

The Union of Ontario Indians is the oldest political organization in Ontario and can trace its roots back to the Confederacy of Three Fires, which existed long before European contact.

## **Aboriginal artifact destruction a concern**

[Lethbridge Herald](#)

Wednesday, 05 June 2013 02:01 May, Katie  
Katie May

Desecration of ancient aboriginal artifacts is still a "huge" problem in southern Alberta, according to a Blackfoot elder.

Concerned by ongoing vandalism of rock art and medicine wheels at some cultural sites in the region - along with simple ignorance of their significance - Jerry Potts brought together some archeologists, researchers, industry representatives and keepers of traditional wisdom to raise public awareness about ancient sites.

The result was a first-of-its-kind "Renewing our Relationship with the Land" meeting of minds at the University of Lethbridge, attracting more than 130 people. The two-day conference, ending today, explores the legal, cultural and social impacts of

preserving First Nations land, both on Blackfoot territory in southern Alberta and on Blackfeet territory in Montana.

Conference organizer Potts said he wants to create partnerships between cultural experts and archeologists to ensure that ancient artifacts are properly preserved and correctly understood.

"The archeological sites are probably some of the most educational tools that we have in terms of this is where we were, this is what happened. Our culture is in existence all around our territory; we have to try and bring awareness to that," he said.

"Archeology has a way of interpreting what these sites are, but now they're finding to get the right interpretation, they have to bring the traditional component in to get real understanding."

Rock art, which ancient tribes used as place markers and as a way to send messages to each other, now attracts graffiti. Some sites, like the famous "big rock" erratic in Okotoks, and Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, have been repeat victims of vandalism, Potts said.

"There's a number of these sites that have some very serious spiritual meaning to us, and now you go there and they're being defaced and there are people that are disrupting the ground where they were," he said, adding if the destruction continues, "they're going to disappear."

That's why he and the other conference attendees are working to foster an attitude of respect and understanding.

"We know we're never going to get all our land back. That's just not going to happen. But I think from our existence and who we are, we're trying to protect these sites and develop some partnerships for access to be able to get in there and work with them, work with the archeologists to better understand," Potts said.

"We're just asking that 'hey, you know, respect who we are.' We've been here a long time.

We're not going away. Our culture and our ways of life need to be respected for future generations," he added. "People talk about preserving the land, but they forget the land means something to a people that's been here a long time."

Organizers initially expected a small turnout for the event, but Potts is now mulling plans for future events: "Once you open a door, you never know what's going to come out of it," he laughed.

The conference continues today, delving into legal issues that stem from treaties and court decisions over land rights. Scheduled speakers include Native American Studies professor Leroy Little Bear and representatives from TransCanada Ltd.

## **Alberta Métis Granted Greater Authority For Resource Development In Settlement Areas**

[Stikeman Elliott LLP](#)

June 5 2013

The Energy Practice Group

On May 16, 2013, the Alberta government and the Métis Settlements General Counsel agreed to amendments to the existing co-management agreement between such parties, which will provide Métis settlements within the province of Alberta with increased benefits from oil and gas development on Métis settlement lands.

The original co-management agreement, which established rules for oil and gas development under Métis settlement lands, is a part of the Métis settlement accord signed in 1990. While the province of Alberta maintains ownership of mines and minerals, the original co-management agreement included provisions which permit the Métis settlements to negotiate an equity participation of up to 25 per cent in any oil and gas development occurring on such settlement lands. With passage of the amendments on May 16, 2013, this 25 per cent cap has now been removed. In addition, the new provisions provide that the Métis settlements now have the authority to require the highest three bidding companies to submit proposals in areas such as local employment, training or infrastructure improvements (the "Benefits Proposals"). The Benefits Proposals will then be submitted to the applicable Métis settlement counsel as part of a final selection process for energy projects occurring on their settlement lands.

Alberta has eight Métis settlements in northern Alberta representing a land area of just over a half million hectares. According to the new provisions, the first mineral rights under Métis settlement lands will be made available for bidding at the June 3, 2013 bi-weekly provincial land sale.

## **Library hosting National Aboriginal History Month events throughout June**



[Edmonton Examiner](#)

Wednesday, June 5, 2013 12:07:58

MDT PM

Kevin Maimann

*An RCMP Sergeant inspects Hobbema-based cadets during a past year's National Aboriginal History at the Alberta Legislature Building. FILE PHOTO QMI Agency*

The Edmonton Public Library has launched a month's worth of events to mark National Aboriginal Day.

EPL began celebrating National Aboriginal History Month on Monday, and its family-friendly events will continue throughout June at every branch in the city.

"We want to recognize aboriginal culture and history and their contribution to Canada. We've got a large aboriginal population in Edmonton, which is growing," says Valerie McNiven, EPL's aboriginal services liaison and the manager of Abbottsfield Library.

Artist Amanda Woodward will visit several library branches to tell stories and lead craft classes, while internationally renowned author Richard Van Camp, who was recognized by the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers as 2007's Storyteller of the Year, will also bring his talent to traditional aboriginal storytelling sessions.

On June 13, the Stanley A. Milner Library Theatre will screen the documentary 8th Fire — which explores Canada's 500-year-old relationship with its indigenous peoples — followed by a Q&A with Ashley Callingbull, who appears in the film and also stars in APTN series Blackstone.

McNiven says Aboriginal History Month events are always popular at the library.

"We try to have something at every single branch throughout the month," she says.

"And the feedback from the audience has always been really positive. It's always, 'You guys should do more of this!'"

EPL's community librarians work with the aboriginal community throughout the year. The Mill Woods Library hosts aboriginal family nights, while the Sprucewood Library regularly hosts aboriginal story time events. For a full listing of this month's events, visit [www.epl.ca/aboriginal/NAHM2013](http://www.epl.ca/aboriginal/NAHM2013)

June 21 is National Aboriginal Day in Canada.

## **Aboriginal Day to strengthen relationships**

[Grande Prairie Daily Herald Tribune](#)

June 4, 2013 3:09:20 MDT PM



*Winona Lafreniere*

This year's Aboriginal Day celebration will make history in the City of Grande Prairie. Not only will it be one of the biggest celebrations, but also the Grande Prairie Aboriginal Circle of Services (GPACOS) will formalize a bond with the city.

The city's community living committee recently approved a document that describes how the city and the GPACOS will strengthen their relationship and work closer together.



The document and proclamation will be signed on Sunday, June 23, during the Grande Prairie Aboriginal Day celebrations. National Aboriginal Day is June 21 but GPACOS will present the document Sunday to capture a wider audience for the historic event.

"For me it feels very positive and forthcoming knowing that we got the city on board and to help strengthen that relationship that we already had. But to formalize it and have a proclamation or signing of declaration will be even better," said Winona Lafreniere of GPACOS.

"For us, it's history making."

During the city's activateGP Citizen Engagement Program launch, which was held last fall, GPACOS presented city administration with a draft document. The document had the intent of developing stronger Aboriginal ties within the municipality.

Since then the city's director of community living, Garry Roth, and manager of marketing and communications, David Olinger, have met with representatives of GPACOS to transform the document into a framework.

"What we began working on were some tangible steps to work into that document that would make it a living document. We would be able to say what we are committed to," Olinger said.

"We brought forward a document that will walk the talk, if you will."

The framework document recognizes the role Aboriginal people have played in the development of Grande Prairie and the opportunity for Aboriginal representatives to continue to have a strong voice in the city's future.

It highlights opportunities such as encouraging GPACOS to have representation on the Welcoming and Inclusive Communities Committee and using GPACOS as a sounding board on relevant issues.

"The idea is that Aboriginal people must have a voice in moving our situation forward. We cannot solely depend on others to create a better situation for us. It's something we have to do collectively and the Aboriginal community needs to have a voice in that and perhaps take the lead," said Dennis Whitford, senior advisor of the Peace River Aboriginal Inter-Agency Committee.

## **Do B.C. laws protect people living on First Nations land from huge rent increases?**

[Vancouver Sun](#)

June 5, 2013. 10:05 pm

Bethany Lindsay



Most British Columbians who have a basic grasp of their rights as tenants would put up a fight when they hear their landlord plans to nearly triple their rents.

That's exactly what Christine Farmer and Jesse George did they discovered their rent was going to skyrocket from about \$6,500 per year to \$24,000 per year in a mobile home park near Powell River on land owned by the Sechelt Indian Band.

(After much uproar from the community, the band agreed to a staggered increase that would see rents climb from \$9,000 in the first year of increases to about \$18,000 by the fifth, according to [court documents](#).)

Farmer and George took the issue to the Residential Tenancy Branch, where a dispute resolution officer found that the rent increases were in contravention of the Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act.

But B.C.'s highest court tossed out that decision in a [ruling](#) today. The Court of Appeal found that the RTB didn't have any power in the matter because the constitution holds that the province has no jurisdiction over "Lands reserved for the Indians."

In other words, what happens on Sechelt Indian Band land is a matter for the feds.

The appeal court decision overturns the ruling of B.C. Supreme Court Justice Arne Silverman, who agreed with the RTB's view on the rent increase. Silverman wrote that Sechelt Band land was only involved in the discussion "incidentally and in a very minor way, if at all. This dispute is not about land, it is about money. It is about a rent increase."

The appeal court judges saw things differently, unanimously agreeing that the heart of the matter at hand was the management of Sechelt land.

That means that the Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act — and I would assume this extends to B.C.'s Residential Tenancy Act as well — "is constitutionally inapplicable to any landlord and tenant relationship created by lease on the Sechelt Lands."

## **Funding cuts to major aboriginal political groups undermine 'potential for progress,' Chief Shawn Atleo says**

[Ottawa Citizen](#)

June 5, 2013

Michael Woods



*Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Atleo  
Photograph by: Adrian Wyld/The Canadian Press, Postmedia News*

OTTAWA — The Harper government is slashing funding to several major aboriginal political organizations — including the Assembly of First Nations — a surprise move that the group's national chief says flies in the face of the government's stated intention to work with First Nations.

A letter from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, sent to 43 Aboriginal representative organizations and obtained by Postmedia News, outlines changes to the way the groups will be funded, including sharp reductions in dollars. The AFN, the national organization representing Canada's First Nation citizens, is seeing its project funding reduced by 30 per cent in the 2013-14 fiscal year.

"The level of the cuts and the timing is a real surprise to all of our organizations, including the AFN," the group's National Chief Shawn Atleo said in an interview. "Our people being some of the most vulnerable already ... I feel strongly these contradict, and they undermine, the potential for progress."

Money from Aboriginal Affairs makes up about half of the AFN's overall budget. Other organizations affected include the Metis National Council, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

The government said last year it would change the way it funds Aboriginal organizations. The groups were expecting cuts to project funding, but not to this extent.

"Project funding in 2013-14 and future years will be allocated only to projects that demonstrate clear and achievable outcomes and that are linked to departmental priorities," says the letter, dated June 3. The goal, the letter says, is to promote more self-sufficient aboriginal communities and "eliminate duplication and replication of projects."

But Atleo says he has a "deep concern" that the cuts will impact groups' ability to help provide services in the realm of health care, clean water and other areas in communities that badly need them.

"I can't emphasize enough that in my view, it flies in the face of ... the stated intention of governments to work with First Nations," he said. "It's inconsistent. At a time when our people are the most vulnerable, we should be working together and there should be investments in First Nations."

"It's demonstrating that we have a system that's broken and not working," Atleo added. "We've got to get on with First Nations no longer just being an afterthought."

A department spokesperson said the changes will help ensure funding is directed at essential services and programs for Aboriginal people.

"The objective is to ensure that funding is directed at priorities, such as initiatives that contribute to economic development and education," said Aboriginal Affairs spokesperson Geneviève Guibert. "The Government will also work to eliminate the duplication of projects and to ensure that resources are focused on projects that have a positive and productive impact on the Aboriginal people as they are intended."

"The Government values its relationship with Aboriginal Representative Organizations and is committed to continuing to work with them to advance shared priorities."

In the coming months, the government will announce details of a dedicated project fund that the organizations will be able to access starting in 2014-15, the letter says. It says project proposals will be assessed by a national selection committee that will "look for proposals that will yield concrete results and move shared priorities forward."

But a senior AFN official said the department hasn't elaborated on how such a system would work.

"I can't imagine a less effective way of delivering project funds than the way that they're proposing, through a national selection committee," the senior official said. "It boggles the mind that that would be effective in any way whatsoever."

The AFN has seen its core funding reduced by more than 40 per cent over the last five years, in which time the number of staff in its Ottawa office has decreased by more than half, to about 80 people.

Atleo and Prime Minister Stephen Harper haven't spoken since a much-publicized and controversial Jan. 11 meeting between Harper and First Nations leaders at the height of the grassroots Idle No More movement, a meeting many saw as a potential turning point in the government's relationship with aboriginal Canadians. At the time, the prime minister's office said Harper and Atleo would meet again "in the coming weeks."

Next week is the fifth anniversary of Harper's historic apology for the Indian residential school system, a system that saw 150,000 aboriginal children over about 120 years taken from their parents. Many children experienced physical, sexual and emotional abuse and some died at the schools.

But unilateral actions on the government's part are a departure from its words, Atleo said.

"These cuts serve only to undermine and contradict those sorts of sentiments that have been expressed in the past," he said.

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## **B.C.'s Hupacasath First Nation challenges Canada-China free trade agreement**

[Vancouver Sun](#)

June 5, 2013

Dene Moore



*The Hupacasath First Nation reserve in B.C. seen in 2009. Photograph by: Postmedia News files, Postmedia News*

**VANCOUVER** - Members of a small British Columbia aboriginal band are in a federal court room in Vancouver this week, as their 300-member community tries to stop the federal government from passing a free trade deal with China.

The Hupacasath First Nation has launched a court challenge to the Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement, arguing that it infringes on aboriginal rights.

"It's something all Canadians should be paying attention to," said Brenda Sayers, the organizer of the band's campaign against the deal. "We're looking at this as not being just a First Nations concern, but for all people of Canada."

Critics of the Canada-China agreement fear the deal will give foreign corporations leverage over Canadian regulatory and resource decisions, allowing Chinese corporations to seek arbitration or even sue Canada for decisions that negatively affect their access to Canadian resources.

The Hupacasath are arguing in court that the federal government has failed to consult with First Nations on the deal that affects their rights and title.

Even provinces could lose their decision-making ability on resource development, Sayers said.

The band has the support of groups such as the Chiefs of Ontario, the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Auto Workers and ForestEthics.

The Hucapasath have crowd-sourced more than \$160,000 to pay the legal bill, with donations from 3,000 people to an online campaign organized by the non-profit activist group LeadNow.

About 150 people gathered at a rally Wednesday outside the federal court, which has set aside three days for a hearing.

Critics of the deal cited a lawsuit launched under the auspices of the North American Free Trade Agreement over the Quebec government's moratorium on hydraulic fracking for shale gas.

Calgary-based Lone Pine Resources Inc., has opened an office in Delaware and launched the lawsuit seeking \$250 million from the federal government because its exploration permits were cancelled "without due process, without compensation."

"This is what investment protection looks like. It's basically a bail-out for corporations when communities decide to say no," Harjap Grewal, of the Council of Canadians, said at the noon-hour rally.

"This court challenge by the Hucapasath is going to lead the way in showing how fundamentally flawed all of these agreements are."

Sayers said she is particularly concerned about Chinese companies involved in oil pipelines, as B.C. grapples with proposals that would see the Pacific coast become an oil exporting hub.

The Conservative government is pursuing a host of international trade agreements, including deals with Japan, India and a Trans-Pacific deal that would include Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam.

Expansion of Canadian exports in the Asia-Pacific is a key plank of the federal economic action plan, and the federal government has said the Foreign Investment and Promotion and Protection agreement will give Canadians greater access to Chinese markets.

## **Suicide study reveals depth of Nunavut's mental health problems**

[Toronto Star](#)

June 6, 2013



*RICHARD LAUTENS / TORONTO STAR Plain markers sit in the cold stone atop the permafrost in the Hall Beach cemetery in Nunavut. Nunavut's suicide rate is 10 times the Canadian average and much higher than that for young men. It is difficult to find anyone in Nunavut who hasn't had a friend or family member commit suicide. By: The Canadian Press, Published on Wed Jun 05 2013*

**IQALUIT, NUNAVUT**—The biggest study ever done into the risk factors for Nunavut's high suicides rates has revealed the depth of mental health problems in the territory.

"The rates of major psychiatric illness found in this study were higher than in the general Canadian population," said the report released Wednesday in Iqaluit. "The rates of major depressive disorder among Inuit in our study were higher than the national average."

The study analyzed the life history of 120 Inuit who killed themselves between 2003 and 2006 through interviews with surviving friends and family. Those histories were compared with profiles of 120 demographically similar Inuit.

The result of years of work by groups including the territorial government, the RCMP and McGill University, the study is an attempt to understand suicide risk factors in Nunavut.

Suicide is one of the territory's most pressing public health issues. Nunavut's suicide rate is 10 times the Canadian average and much higher than that for young men. It is difficult to find anyone in Nunavut who hasn't had a friend or family member commit suicide.

In the past, suicide among Inuit was rare. Rates began rising in the 1980s.

The study found that the deaths that were analyzed tended to be among single, unemployed males with relatively less education. The average age was 24. They had high rates of alcohol and cannabis use.

Child sexual abuse was a major risk factor. Almost half the people who killed themselves had been victims, compared with just over one-quarter of the comparison group.

The life histories suggested that those who went through with suicide tended to be much more impulsive and aggressive than others.

The study also found that severe depression was a problem for both groups.

Almost two-thirds of those who killed themselves had been diagnosed before their deaths with severe depression. That figure was 24 per cent in the control group.

That's three times the Canadian average for severe depression, and higher than the national average for all mental illnesses combined.

Previous research has linked the rise in Inuit suicide rates to the removal of Inuit from the land and their traditional lifestyle.

One study correlated suicide rates among Inuit in Alaska, Nunavut and Greenland with the period when governments encouraged them to move off the land and into communities.

In all three countries, suicide rates began to rise among the first generation born in towns — the sons and daughters of those who had grown up on the land.

The trend began in north Alaska in the 1960s, in Greenland in the 1970s and in Nunavut in the 1980s.

The Nunavut government instituted a suicide prevention plan in 2011, but critics have criticized its implementation.

## **First Nations leaders crank the revs to promote treaty rights on Prairies**



[Metro News](#)

June 6, 2013

*Metro/Bernice Pontanilla Grand Chief Derek Nepinak of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, pictured during a press conference in December of 2012.*

A top Manitoba aboriginal leader is hopping on a motorcycle and heading across the Prairies to raise awareness of treaty rights.

Grand Chief Derek Nepinak of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs is joining other First Nations leaders and supporters for the Treaty Freedom Caravan and Ride.

The group will spend 10 days trekking across six treaty territories in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, using motorcycles and support vehicles.

The group started their venture Thursday by holding a pipe ceremony at Lower Fort Garry in Winnipeg, near the site of where Treaty One was signed in the 1870s.

Nepinak says in a release that First Nations people need to be reminded of the freedom that treaties hold for them.

Each First Nation visited will get a piece of coal from a treaty fire, which will be used to light a fire on June 21st — Aboriginal Solidarity Day.

## Dancing, drumming part of National Day of Healing and Reconciliation

[The Guardian](#)

June 6, 2013

Bo Ford



*Guardian photo Lucy Knockwood, left, and Summer Peters, students at Mt. Stewart Consolidated, get a lesson on drumming from Drezmond Lewis and Parker Larkin, Lone Cry Singers. Mt. Stewart hosted a National Day of Healing and Reconciliation at the school Wednesday.*

MOUNT STEWART — The sound of drums and sight of dancing filled Mount Stewart Consolidated School on Wednesday.

Students and community members gathered to tell stories, watch spiritual dances and listen to songs by First Nations people during ceremonies marking the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation.

Dion Bernard performed different spiritual dances for the community during the celebrations.

He said he made a life decision that made him want to teach others.

"I was out on my own and my friends were into

drugs. We were in the back of a yard and someone asked me to try it. I looked back at my house and I decided I'm not going to do that."

Bernard was the black sheep with his friends and was always doing something different. He said the decision he made that day was a life-changing experience.

"When I was lost and I didn't know what to do, and I didn't have many friends because of my decisions, I had to go to the elders, and some of them taught me how to dance."

Some people have told him to watch different animals to learn how to dance.

"If you're going to do a crow hop, you have to watch how a crow awkwardly hops. Birds aren't built to walk, they're built to fly, so it's kind of neat to see how they walk around," he said.

Magnificent is how Bernard said he felt to be able to show other people how to do the dance.

"To me it means a lot, it's the survival of our nations, I'm not that good of a dancer, but I'm still considered a teacher, at our best we all teach."

It's important for Bernard to keep the lifestyle alive.

"This type of lifestyle has survived for many years, even through first contact we were still able to do most of our traditions through our elders who taught us the oral traditions," he said. "It's important for us to learn the language so we can hear all of the old stories."

A lot of people no longer know how to do the dances or speak the language, he said.

"I hope if I can teach them and they take an interest in it, maybe they will dig as deep as I did," said Bernard. "It has a sense of a magical or spiritual feel for it, considering most of the people would take this to heart."

National Healing and Reconciliation Day falls on June 11, and marks the day Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized in 2008, to the First Nations for residential school era abuse and neglect.

Marilyn LeFrank, director of child and family services for the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of P.E.I said the culture was lost during that era..

"What we know is through the residential school era, children weren't allowed to participate in their culture, if they did so they were reprimanded by the people who were caring for them."

This is the second year for the celebrations at Mount Stewart Consolidated, started last year by Michelle Jay, the school's guidance counsellor.

"It's shows the culture to the community," said LeFrank.

"It's vitally important, for years through the residential school era the culture was lost. So it's a rejuvenation of the culture and just being able to celebrate that."

## Saskatchewan chiefs back female vice-chief

[Global News](#)

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*Saskatchewan chiefs back female vice-chief, say women play important role.* Devin Sauer / Global News

SASKATOON – Aboriginal leaders attending the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations legislative assembly have shown widespread support for first vice-chief Kim Jonathan.

Jonathan won last fall's election by only nine votes and candidate Sheldon Wuttunee appealed.

Jonathan was reinstated to her position in late April by the FSIN's executive council despite calibration errors that were found with a vote counting machine.

That decision went against what an independent appeals tribunal proposed when it found the chief electoral officer was in a conflict of interest that interfered with the democratic process of the election.

The FSIN executive council once again went against the appeals tribunal at the assembly Wednesday, voting to disagree with the tribunal's decision to declare last fall's first vice chief election results null and void.

In all, 43 chiefs voted to support Jonathan, two were opposed and five abstained.

Chiefs from across the province spoke about how important it was for women to play a leadership role in the FSIN and how it provides a voice for First Nations women in the organization.

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